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SONGS of the TRAIL



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Songs of the Trail

Songs of the Trail

BY

Henry Herbert Knibbs

Illustrations by

HAROLD CUE



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
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1920

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TO
RALPH GARNIER COOLE

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(RECAP)

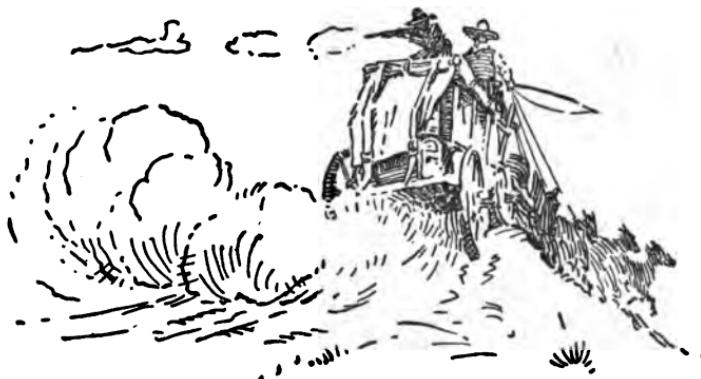
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*Her canon altars know my fires,
Her ranges know my secret heart,
The old, unuttered, strange desires
That urge to dwell with her, apart.*

*Yet not aloof from humankind,
When chance shall bring a friendly face;
Nor dreams so deep I may not find
Much music in my pony's pace.*



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Songs of the Trail







I HAVE BUILDED ME A HOME

OH, I have builded me a home, and yet,
My heart is wayward still and wanders far
Among the goodly fellows I have met
By sun and star:

By camp-fires in the land of little rain;
By river-courses shrinking in the heat;
By mountain-meadow, valley trail, or plain
Where wanderers meet.

Oh, ever restless and forever young
In our impetuous adventuring,
Impatient, while the older songs were sung,
New songs to sing.

Homeless? Perchance; and yet we had the sky,
A roof-tree wide and fair; a place to sleep

Songs of the Trail

Made clean and fragrant as the winds went by
From steep to steep.

And little was a feast, when smiling June
Danced o'er the mesa, decked with sun and
flower: .
Where, dreaming, we grew silent with the noon,
Gods of the hour!

Our hopes were ours — and by no other heard:
Our joys were rugged and our quarrels swift;
Sunk in conclusive action — or a word
And set adrift.

And that was when the West was in its dawn:
And that was when the range was far and free:
The trails are overgrown, the boys are gone
Who rode with me.

My heart is wayward still and yearns to roam
Among the goodly fellows I have met:
I left the trail and builded me a home,
And yet . . . and yet . . .

THE PACK TRAIN

OH, some prefer the beaten track from city unto city,
With fence and fence on either side and smoke at either
end,
Nor know the joy of trail and pack — and silence —
more's the pity:
It's *hurry! hurry!* everywhere, and little time to spend.

The morning's on the hills of blue with mist across them
blowing:
Then hang and balance each kyack the dead-weight of
the other,
And lay the diamond neat and true, for up the range we're
going;
Heave hard and steal an inch of slack, and if you can,
another.

All trim and stout? Then string 'em out and start 'em
slow and steady:
Our trail is up the hills of blue with sun on ridge and hol-
low:
The leader knows what he's about — he's wise, but never
heady,
So now there's nothing else to do but fork your horse
and follow.

Songs of the Trail

Around the bend, along the ledge — the clouds are rolling under,

From shore to shore like drifted snow, and in the distance gleaming,

A thread of gold, the ocean-edge: we're higher than the thunder;

With blue above and gray below, and in between we're dreaming.

It's creak of rope and plod of hoof — a sort of outland rhyming,

As up the grade to timber-line we make it mile by mile.
We're riding on the morning's roof — it took a bit of climbing

To top the land of spruce and pine — so let 'em rest awhile.

Then down along this rocky ridge dividing all creation,
The backbone of a giant ram that humps to meet the sky,

A narrow but a solid bridge to reach the Ranger Station,
And there's the flag where Uncle Sam is watching, far and high.

It's closer to the stars than most. Well, all the packs are riding:

It's fuss and fiddle down the grade and shuffle through the Pass,

The Pack Train

And 'way out yonder is the coast the morning mists were
hiding,

And here's the camp, with plenty shade and mountain-
meadow grass.

So slack the ropes and drop the packs and let 'em go to
grazing,

They've earned a rest — they put it through two hours
ahead of night:

Just watch 'em roll to dry their backs: they won't need
any hazing

To feed and water on The Blue — and how's *your* appe-
tite?

MAKE ME NO GRAVE

MAKE me no grave within that quiet place
Where friends shall sadly view the grassy mound,
Politely solemn for a little space,
As though the spirit slept beneath the ground.

For me no sorrow, nor the hopeless tear;
No chant, no prayer, no tender eulogy:
I may be laughing with the gods — while here
You weep alone. Then make no grave for me.

But lay me where the pines, austere and tall,
Sing in the wind that sweeps across the West:
Where night, imperious, sets her coronal
Of silver stars upon the mountain crest.

Where dawn, rejoicing, rises from the deep,
And Life, rejoicing, rises with the dawn:
Mark not the spot upon the sunny steep,
For with the morning light I shall be gone.

Far trails await me; valleys vast and still,
Vistas undreamed of, cañon-guarded streams,
Lowland and range, fair meadow, flower-girt hill,
Forests enchanted, filled with magic dreams.

Make Me No Grave

And I shall find brave comrades on the way:

None shall be lonely in adventuring,

For each a chosen task to round the day,

New glories to amaze, new songs to sing.

Loud swells the wind along the mountain-side,

High burns the sun, unfettered swings the sea,

Clear gleam the trails whereon the vanished ride,

Life calls to life: then make no grave for me!

SO DAY BY DAY HE CLIMBS THE HILL

THERE is a trail beyond the town,
That climbs a little height-of-land,
Then, faltering, wanders slowly down
To lose itself in harbor sand.

And on beyond, against the sky,
Brown sails unfurl and slowly fill,
And march to sea: or anchored, lie
At rest below the harbor hill.

They are but fisher-boats, and yet
The cripple boy who climbs the trail
For each a magic course has set,
And glorified each sea-worn sail.

When some familiar prow appears,
Plunging across the wide sea-space,
He waves his cap and proudly cheers,
And Romance lights his eager face.

The shining fish are silver bars
From some far island of the Main:
The fishermen are British tars
Who took a galleon of Spain.

So Day by Day He Climbs the Hill

The bearded Russ who gives command
To burly toilers in the hold
Is Lord High Admiral — how grand
His uniform of sun-wrought gold!

But, hist! Another sail is seen,
Deep laden with its silver horde,
And dories wallow in the green
With treasure-trove put overboard!

The cripple boy is all delight:
A privateer! The Wing-and-Wing!
“Ahoy!” he calls. “How went the fight?”
And, “Welcome from your wandering!”

So day by day he climbs the hill,
And day by day he scans the sea:
While sails unfurl and slowly fill,
Or lie at anchor lazily.

And he has wrought amazing things —
A booty won — adventure planned:
And he is happier than kings
Upon his little height-of-land.

THE HOUR BEYOND THE HOUR

CAÑON gloom and a Western star, and my friend who sang
in the summer night;
Sang for me of the trail and pine, blue and gold of the
upland noon:
Lightly he touched the old guitar, singing low in the can-
dle-light,
Under the rose-tree and the vine, silver-pale in the quest-
ing moon.

The valley flowers bid me rest,
The valley stream is clear and cool:
The bird is silent in her nest,
The trout is idle in the pool.

The world I knew is far away;
The world I know is but a dream,
Yet I can see the grasses sway,
And I can hear the chattering stream.

Yet should I stay — and what avail?
The valley flowers bid me rest,
But ever calls the upland trail,
And ever calls the timbered crest.

The Hour Beyond the Hour

They call me from the world I know,
As they have called of old to men:
Is it from dream to dream I go,
And the awakening — where, and when?

Far winds the trail — and far the pine,
And blue and gold the upland noon
Of yesterday: and here, the vine,
And silver-pale the questing moon.

Yet should I stay — and what avail?
Forever calls the timbered crest,
And ever calls the upland trail —
The hour beyond the hour, is best.

The soft, eternal questioning of Silence filled the summer
night,
As there, beneath the rose and vine I heard the echo of a
tune,
The whisper of a silver string. So ends the song, and far the
height:
Thus sang my friend of trail and pine, the blue and gold
of upland noon.

THE SUN-WORSHIPERS

THE trail is high whereon we ride, with all the world below
to see,

The cleft of canon, sweep of range and winter-white of
lonely peak;

Lean foothold on the mountain-side, and on, beyond, The
Mystery,

The unattained, the hidden land we may not find, but
ever seek.

Content were vain. Our discontent, divine, forever urges
on

Through stress and danger, scorned or shared, though
journey's end be never won:

Say you our days are vainly spent whose eyes have looked
upon the dawn

From high Chilao's morning crest, and bathed our faces
in the Sun?

We worship not what men have made: no thing so small
is our desire.

The little words of men that die, the little thoughts of
men that dream,

Shall perish in their utterance: and build for these an altar
fire?

Our creed is written in the sky, our song in the eternal
stream.

The Sun-Worshippers

We journey on from star to star, nor shall we find a dwelling-place,

Nor yet implore surcease from toil: to be and to adore, is all:

Beholding dimly from afar the glory of the Hidden Face,
Our worship ever our reward, the quest our golden coronal.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

My pony nickers at the corral bars,
The fog drifts landward from the evening sea:
The trail we rode is dim beneath the stars . . .
Do you remember, friend who rode with me?

Shadowy range and range, and at each bend,
A pit of black as fathomless as space,
A trail with no beginning and no end,
Where even Silence hid her listening face?

Beyond each step there spread the deep Unknown;
Below, the mountain stream sang ceaselessly:
We rode together — yet each rode alone —
Do you remember, friend who rode with me?

Down from the height to valley deep and still,
Where no star shone within the forest gloom;
Where sense of place was lost, and Time stood still,
The shuttle trembling midway in the loom.

Only our patient ponies knew the way,
Plodding with slow assurance through the night:
Would we could read as clearly in the day,
Each step beyond, in valley or on height.

Do You Remember?

Forgive the preachment — I had lost the trail.

To eulogize the horses is my theme,
To sing the blue wherein the eagles sail,
To chant of mountains and the cañon-stream:

The glory of the sunset and the dawn,
The wind that drew a lyric from the pines,
And made us wish the clothing we had on
Were not so thin, and shaped on different lines.

The trail brings hardship, toil, and goodly sweat:
As Homespun says: "Thereon you flirt with Death";
It knocks one's floating ribs ashore — and yet,
It lengthens friendship, though it shortens breath.

Beyond each step there spread the deep Unknown;
Below a hidden stream sang ceaselessly:
We rode together — yet each rode alone,
Do you remember, friend who rode with me?

GODS OF THE RED MEN

(DEDICATED TO BUCK CONNOR)

We, the invaders, bore them down
To meager number, broken rank,
Idling along the river-bank,
Lingering in each historic town:

Bearing the hour with patient stride,
Burdened with dreams of old desires
Rekindled at their kiva-fires —
Back to their gods in sullen pride.

Their cherished deities forlorn,
Of ravished temple, tillage, grave,
God of the green, the lance-leaved corn,
God of the Sun, the Wind, the Wave,
God of the long, last resting-place,
God of Darkness, god of Birth,
God of the Rain, the War, the Chase,
God of the Arrow, god of Mirth.

Their cherished gods, unknown to us
Who once — our gods so widely known —
Cried to the world: “To each his own,
And each may worship thus or thus!”

Gods of the Red Men

**And still we stoop and dare to thrust
A Book between their listless hands:
Dreaming of long-forgotten lands
They kiss the page — because they must.'**

TO MY DOG, "QUIEN SABE"

(IN THE HAPPY HUNTING GROUNDS)

DID the phantom hills seem strange, Quien,
When you left the light for that ghostly land?
Do you dream of the open range, Quien,
The tang of sage and the sun-warmed sand?

Does your great heart yearn for the sweep of space,
The desert dawn and the sunset glow,
When we had no care, nor a dwelling-place,
In the lonely land that we used to know?

Do you dream of those outland days, Quien,
The fierce, white noon and the piñon shade?
The luck we shared on the ways, Quien,
Young and lusty and unafraid?

Comrade, keen for the hunt and kill;
Comrade, patient and strong and wise,
The firelight flares — and I see you still,
Calling me with your wistful eyes.

You cannot know that I cannot come —
My work is here for a while — and then . . .
My heart cries out, though my lips are dumb,
And my hands are chained to the wheel, Quien.

To My Dog, Quien Sabe

Yet am I glad that your soul is free
To run the trails of our old delight:
Only — I ask that you wait for me,
And you will know, be it day or night,

Know, and leap at my call, Quien,
And forever pace with my pony's stride,
And never a star shall fall, Quien,
And never again our trails divide.

ARIZONA

THE forest fades as the slow sun passes,
Stars of the pines come trembling through,
And the mesa dim, with its wavering grasses,
Whispers the old, old song of you!

Arizona! The dearest lover
Of all the wild, free Western strain,
Blushing up from your cloudy cover,
Young and fair in the flashing rain.

You were ours when we wore good leather,
Horses and men both hard to hold:
Ranging wide in the sun together,
Riding ever a trail of gold.

Dawn, when your clear, cool eyes were brimming
Wide with the blue of a cloudless sky:
And magic dusk, when the stars were swimming
Close to your breast, where we chose to lie.

Dawn and dusk and the wide world singing
Songs that thrilled with the pulse of life
As we clattered down with our rein-chains ringing,
To woo you — but never to make you wife.

Arizona

Yet of your heart you gave full measure,
Splendid wealth of your upland soil,
As we fought for your far-flung emerald treasure,
And held it — by war and wit and toil.

Arizona! The tramp of cattle,
The biting dust and the raw-red brand:
Shuffling sheep and the smoke of battle:
The upturned face and the empty hand.

Yea! But we loved you, your belted lovers,
Warring down from the Butte and Blue . . .
Now — and the night wind softly hovers,
Over the faces lost for you.

THE VALLEY THAT GOD FORGOT

Out in the desert spaces, edged by a hazy blue,
Davison sought the faces of the long-lost friends he knew:

They were there, in the distance dreaming
Their dreams that were worn and old;
They were there, to his frenzied seeming,
Still burrowing down for gold.

Davison's face was leather; his mouth was a swollen blot,

His mind was a floating feather, in The Valley That God Forgot;

Wild as a dog gone loco,
Or sullen or meek, by turns,
He mumbled a "Poco! Poco!"
And whispered of pools and ferns.

Gold! Why his, for the finding! But water was never found,

Save in deep caverns winding miles through the under-ground:

Cool, far, shadowy places
Edged by the mirrored trees,
When — Davison saw the faces!
And fear let loose his knees.

The Valley that God Forgot

There was Shorty who owed him money, and Billing who
bossed the crowd;

And Steve whom the boys called "Sunny," and Collins
who talked so loud:

Miguel with the handsome daughter,
And the rustler, Ed McCray;
Five — and they begged for water,
And offered him gold, in pay.

Gold? It was never cheaper. And Davison shook his head:
"The price of a drink is steeper out here than in town," he
said.

He laughed as they mouthed and muttered
Through lips that were cracked and dried;
The pulse in his ear-drum fluttered:
"I'm through with the game!" he cried.

"I'm through!" And he knelt and fumbled the cap of his
dry canteen

Then, rising, he swayed and stumbled into a black ravine:
His ghostly comrades followed,
For Davison's end was near,
And a shallow grave they hollowed,
When up from it, cool and clear

Bubbled the water—hidden a pick-stroke beneath the sand;
Davison, phantom-ridden, scooped with a shaking
hand . . .

Songs of the Trail

Davison swears they made it,
The Well where we drank to-day.
Davison's game? He played it
And won — so the town-folk say:

Called it, The Morning-Glory — near those abandoned
stamps,
And Davison's crazy story was told in a hundred camps:
Time and the times have tained it,
His yarn — and this desert spot,
But I'm strong for the man who named it,
The Valley That God Forgot.

THE MAGIC OF THE BOOK

His mind is filled with mysteries, adventurings and histories,

His heart is like a colt a-field that views the distant green —

A colt that yearns to run and run forever with the rolling sun,

But finds that he must ever yield the fence that's in between.

He earns a modest recompense — and gazes past his meadow fence:

A youngling hard at either hand with many questionings,

The while he dreams of Far Away, or lordly banners brave and gay,

And tread of legions shakes the land as in the brunt he flings.

He is a gentle cavalier — again, a modest buccaneer
Who rides the trail or sails the sea on many a page at home:

Then turns the light and goes to bed to dream of phantom trails that led

From office-desk to Arcady, from garden-patch to Nome.

Songs of the Trail

He knows the lure of desert gold: he knows Alaska's biting cold;

Or, anchored in a wide lagoon, he sees the morning ride
Across an isle-enchanted deep where long-forgotten sea-
men sleep,

Their anchor-song the gray typhoon, their requiem the tide.

Or, bravely donning chaps and boots, among the Arizona buttes

He rides a dry and dusty trail beneath the steely skies,
While rope and iron, hoof and rein, fair-grounded steer and
smoking plain,

And maverick with arching tail, stand sharp before his
eyes.

Or, voyaging the Northern woods — those misty, fragrant
solitudes —

He ventures in his light canoe with duffle, rod, and gun,
Snubbing her down a foaming pitch past rock and ripple's
warning twitch,

Or, with his hero, overdue, he takes 'em on the run.

Yet from his home goes never thence, beyond the strong-
built meadow fence,

Nor ever shows by word or look the life he longs to dare:
But does his work with cheery zest; he gives his all and
gives his best;

Then, by the magic of the book, he wanders everywhere.

The Magic of the Book

**By prow and helm, by belt and spur, he is your true ad-
venturer!**

**Undaunted by the odds of Fate, the grip of circum-
stance:**

**Each day I pass him in the street as from his work, with
eager feet**

He hastens, quietly elate, to wander with Romance.

BANDY AND THE SHORE-TRAIL

ALL along the beaches in his self-sufficient solitude,
Up from San Diego to the shores of Monterey,
Bandy used to wander just because he found the walking
good,
And room to spread his blanket where there was no rent
to pay.

Bandy was a Hobo with a kind of hazy notion, yes!
That somehow, in the scheme of things, his duty was to
roam,
Searching for a secret, when he was n't lying motionless,
Watching for the faces in the bubbles of the foam.

Yes, Bandy had a mission — 't was the dream of his ad-
venturing
To find a hidden treasure on some lone and sandy
shore : . .
One summer day he told me, while I listened without cen-
suring
His rather forceful adjectives — now stricken from the
score.

“There's something that the ocean says. I'd like to under-
stand it,
When a-rushing and a-slushing she is pounding up the
sand,

Bandy and the Shore-Trail

And I run and stoop and listen hard, but just before I land it,
She rolls it back to sea again a-laughing at the land.

“She is wasting mighty music on that secret, I’m a-thinking:

And I’m a-wasting leather scuffing up and down the beach:

But when I get my driftwood fire, and see the stars a-blinking,

I can almost crawl and get it, for it ain’t so far to reach.”

“It’s a word!” So Bandy told me; and he told me if I found it,

I would have the key to treasures that were buried long ago;

I picked a shell from out the sand and motioned him to sound it,

He held it to his ear awhile, then whispered: “Now I know!”

He corded up his blanket, shrugged his lean and ragged shoulders,

Took my piece of proffered silver twixt his finger and his thumb,

And whined a dole of thanks amid the scaly, sun-dried boulders,

Then grinned and whispered slowly, “Sir, the secret word is ‘Come!'”

Songs of the Trail

It warmed his heart to find it — 't was the very word he
needed'

As a sort of moral impetus to keep him going free:
And the fisher-folk they tell me he still wanders, all un-
heeded,
Or stands alone, with shell at ear and telephones the sea.

LITTLE BRONC

**LITTLE BRONC, I'm goin' to ride you — you a-hidin' in
between**

Blue and Baldy! Think you're bluffin'
With your snortin' and your puffin';
Quit! And save yourself a roughin',
Guess you sabe what I mean.

**Yes, my loop is wide and trailin' — and your eye a-showin'
white:**

Reckon that I got to show you,
For I broke you and I know you,
Mebby-so I got to throw you
'Fore I get them cinches tight.

**"T ain't no use! I got you comin' and I aim to take a
chance:**

Pitch and squeal and fight ag'in' it!
I'll be with you, in a minute;
Hell to breakfast — all that's in it,
I'm your pardner for this dance!

**Grunt you! Forty pounds of saddle — and you swellin'
like a cow:**

I was raised down on the Tonto,

Songs of the Trail

Where they break and ride 'em pronto:
You're fork-lightnin' to git onto,
But I aim to fork you, now.

Whee! Now just unwind your feelin's! Get them wrinkles
from your hide!
Here's the iron for your balkin',
Just stiff-mad because I'm talkin',
And you aim to set me walkin',
Well, you bronc — I aim to ride!

Steady! Thought you knowed the iron! Guess your pitchin'
fit is done.

Now dig in and scatter dirt, you!
Shakin' 'cause you think I'll quirt you?
Shucks! I never aimed to hurt you,
I'm just playin' with you, son!

See that spot of green, down yonder? That's the town of
San José.
Thirty mile we come a-sweatin',
Tail a-switchin', ears a-frettin',
But your boss is still a-settin'
In the hull, and goin' to stay.

Howdy, John! What, sell this pony? Say, you're talkin'
through your hat;
This here bronc is wise to ropin'.

Little Bronc

Thirty miles we come, a-lopin',
Gentle? Sure! And — well, here's hopin'!
Yes, I'll take a hundred, flat.

Sold that pitchin' chunk of trouble, and there ain't no use
to stay.

Air'll be thick here, after dinner,
When John forks that outlaw sinner:
And I'm goin' where it's thinner:
Yes, I'm leavin' San José.

THE ORO STAGE

ABOUND the bend we streaked it with the leaders swingin'
wide;

Round the bend and down the mountain from the old
El Oro mines:

Jim Waring he was ridin' gun — a sawed-off at his side,
And the sun was settin' level through the pines.

We was late — and come a-reelin',
With the gritty brakes a-squealin',
And the slack a-dancin' lively down the lines.

Jim Waring he said nothin', for he were n't the talkin'
kind;

He left that to his lawyer — and his lawyer was a gun;
But I seen as plain as daylight he had somethin' on his
mind,

'Cause he kept a-glancin' sideways at the sun:
And we hit the grade a-glidin',
With the smokin' tires a-slidin',
Then I give the broncs a chanct, and let 'em run.

And them broncs was doin' noble — layin' clost and
reachin' far,

With the Concord chains a-snappin' and the brakes
a-swingin' free,

The Oro Stage

And the Notch below a-loomin' plumb ag'inst the evenin'
star,

And nothin' in the road that I could see:

Stage a-rollin' — hosses reekin',

With the heavin' springs a-squeakin' —

When Jim Waring touched me gentle with his knee.

Oh, I knowed just what was comin'. We was packin' Oro
dust —

And that hombre there beside me did n't know what
quittin' meant:

We was bustin' on a hold-up. It was Salvador, or bust:

With our chanct of winnin' worth about a cent:

Now I were n't no outlaw stopper,

But I sure could shoot the popper,

So I shot it to the broncs — and in we went.

I seen a bridle shinin' and a shadder in the brush,

Then a streak of red come flittin' and a-spittin' through
the black:

I seen a empty saddle in the ruckus and the rush,

And the leaders pawin' air, and traces slack.

Hell it sure was loose and hoppin'

With Jim Waring's gun a-poppin',

And a-spreadin' his ideas in his track.

If the game was worth the glory, then we ought to had a
crown,

For we sure was nominated, biddin' high for all we got:

Songs of the Trail

I was watchin' of the hosses when I seen Jim's gun come down,
And I smelt the powder-smoke a-blowin' hot,
As we took the grade a-flyin'
With the pinto wheeler dyin'
And Jim doin' business every time he shot.

We made it! And the wind was fannin' cool ag'inst my face:
But the scare was still a-boilin' where I aim to keep my brains:
The wheeler he was weavin' and a-saggin' on the trace,
When San Salvador loomed up acrost the plains.
And we hit the town a-reelin',
With the gritty brakes a-squealin',
And the pinto wheeler draggin' in the chains.

MY MAN

I AM not young and I am not old,
And I know that my face is good to see,
My mouth is red and my hair is gold:
Yet a lass has stolen my man from me.

He has gone to his lass in the gray-green gown;
Old is her heart and cold her eyes:
So men to the waiting ships go down,
And all but their love of the deep sea, dies.

The seaweed swings and the curlew calls;
A stern-light gleams in the starlit bay:
A silver mist from the fore-foot falls,
And my heart is awake to an empty day.

Nor was it for gold that my man would go:
We have enough for our little need:
Nor for love of woman — well I know
That the book of our life was fair to read!

My man! My man! Oh, the restless tide!
When all that I gave could not avail
To turn your steps from the harbor-side,
To call your gaze from a fading sail!

Songs of the Trail

Your eyes grew bright as the dancing foam;
Your heart grew light as the wind-flung wrack:
And you knew no love, and you knew no home,
And you knew no trail but the wide sea-track.

You went to your lass in the gray-green gown,
My love was naught when you would away:
And I sit and wait in the harbor-town,
And my heart is awake to an empty day.

SO LONG, CHINOOK!

(To E. T.)

CHINOOK, you're free; there's plenty pasture there:
Your gallant years have earned you more . . . and
yet . . .
Go on and graze! Don't stand like that and stare!
Now quit your nosing! No, I'll not forget.

You want some sugar? Lady's horse you are!
I reckon that I've spoiled you. Some would say,
"A pet, that lazies by the corral bar,
Rubbing his mane and switching flies all day."

Chinook, they did n't know you as a colt:
We were some young and wild those days, Chinook!
They never tamed a foot-loose thunderbolt
That pawed a star down, every jump he took.

Here now — my pocket 's empty! Drift along.
Your saddle's off. Now can't you understand
We've made the last ride, sung the last old song?
They signed our warrant when they fenced this land.

Doggone it! This is not a funeral.
I've turned you loose for good, old horse; you're free.

Songs of the Trail

Why don't you kick and squeal and act like — well,
Perhaps you feel it's tough to quit — like me.

Say, if you will keep nosing me, why, there!
Listen! Do you remember how *she* came
Laughing — a rosebud pretty in her hair,
And I reached down? And how you played the
game?

You, fire and trouble! that day you stood still
For once: and I was lucky. And that night
I turned you loose to graze on Flores hill:
The yucca never bloomed so tall and white!

Young days, young ways, and many trails to ride,
And Romance tugging at the bridle-rein:
Chinook, and if we swung a bit aside,
We always found the old home trail again.

And here we are! I reckon we're *both* free:
No wonder that you stand like that and look
So solemn and so wise. What's wrong with me?
I'm talking wild, to-day. So long, Chinook!

THE WIND

THE wind marched down the cañon with the lightnings in
his hand;

He thrust the trees aside as he let the lightnings ride
When he loosed them where the dripping walls below Chi-
lao stand.

He tore the autumn music from the cottonwoods of gold
In the hunger of his march from each cloudy arch to arch:
His silver horses spurned the black that down the cañon
rolled.

He struck the sullen water; choked the pool with blinding
leaves:

His fingers, edged with white, raked the stars from out the
night:

He filled and tilted overside the heavens' flooded eaves.

Then he bent his head and listened, and the listeners grew
still:

The huddled quail a-quiver in the thicket by the river,
The buck that stamped and trembled on the trail along the
hill:

The rabbit in the aspens and the fox among the fern,
And the rattler on the ridges where the manzanitas burn.

Songs of the Trail

Then he smote the drum of Silence as he rose from off his knees,
Shook the rain from out his eyes, shook the rafters of the skies,
Fluted music of the giants in the hollows of the trees,
Droned a dirge along the mountain where the stunted timber dies.

Strode untrammeled through the Narrows, matched his thunder with their own:
Ripped the rotting log asunder, drew the flotsam down and under,
Stooped and thrust his lusty shoulder to the rocking river stone;
Cast the stinging spray before him as he marched along, alone.

José de la Crux Y' Barra of Tejunga and the vine,
Crossed himself in sudden dread as he cowered in his bed,
Then he shivered to the table and he poured a glass of wine:
The ruddy embers flickered and the floating ashes fled,
Fluttered softly in the shadows, settled softly on his head—
As the wind drew wild staccato from the shingle and the door,
And the creeping ghost of Winter creaked and chattered on the floor.

The Wind

Deep and dead the moon lay strangled in the meshes of a
cloud,

And the hoofs of silver horses struck a flame along the
land:

Struck the cabin of Y' Barra — and the wind he flung a
shroud:

Shook the granite with his tread as he tramped along the
sand,

Marched from out the midnight cañon with the lightnings
in his hand.

TRAIL SONG

We took the trail with bell and book,
Our candle was a star:
And high and dim the way we took,
To where the peaks, untroubled look
On range and range afar:
Our book, the log of what befell,
Our bell a silver pack-horse bell.

Chilao! Sing Chilao! We're on the upland track:
God send the day be far away when we shall journey
back.

Where Barley Flats lay singing
In the wind across the night,
A pack-horse bell was ringing,
The moon was big and white:
The shadows danced along the tree,
And from the firelight ran
While, round the fire, in reverie,
A little song began:

Chilao! Sing Chilao! The mesquite and the pine!
God send no less content to fill this hungry heart of
mine.

Trail Song

Down deep within The Narrows
We rode a moonlit trail,
Where flashed the silver arrows,
Where fell a silver flail.
In dusk a dream lay hidden
The while we rode along:
A melody unbidden,
A half-remembered song:

Chilao! Sing Chilao! The green below the blue!
God send no other trail than that which leads again to you.

Who packs and trails the world around
May know much wonderment:
But never will a place be found
Wherein is such content
As high Chilao's children know,
Yea, each and every one!
The little brothers of the snow,
The sisters of the sun,
The silent watchers of the pass,
The hunters of the moon,
The angels of the mountain-grass,
Those changelings of June:

Chilao! Sing Chilao! With purple roof and gold!
God send your fires may never die — and we shall not
grow old.

Songs of the Trail

So we, with candle, book, and bell
Have reached Chilao's crest,
Thereon a little while to dwell,
We wanderers of the West:
Then once again to take the trail,
The trail unknown and long,
Our souls where high the eagles sail,
And in our hearts a song:

Chilao! Sing Chilao! The Trail, The Pool, The Sky!
God send no fate that we forget the name we know you by.

WARING OF SONORA-TOWN

THE heat acrost the desert was a-swimmin' in the sun,
When Waring of Sonora-town,
Jim Waring of Sonora-town,
From Salvador come ridin' down, a-rollin' of his gun.

He was singin' low an' easy to his pony's steady feet,
But his eye was live an' driftin'
Round the scenery an' siftin'
All the crawlin' shadows shiftin' in the tremblin' gray
mesquite.

Eyes was watchin' from a hollow where a outlaw
Chola lay:
Two black, snaky eyes, a-yearnin'
For Jim's hoss to make the turnin',
Then — to loose a bullet burnin' through his back
— the Chola way.

Jim Waring's gaze, a-rovin' free an' easy as he rode,
Settled quick — without him seemin'
To get wise an' quit his dreamin' —
On a shiny ring a-gleamin' where no ring had ever
growed.

Songs of the Trail

But the lightnin' don't give warnin' — just a lick, an' she
is through.

Waring set his gun to smokin',
Playful-like — like he was jokin',
An' — a Chola lay a-chokin', an' a buzzard cut the blue.

ROLL A ROCK DOWN

OH, out in the West where the riders are ready,
They sing an old song and they tell an old tale,
And its moral is plain: Take it easy, go steady,
While riding a horse on the Malibu Trail.

It's a high, rocky trail with its switch-backs and doubles,
It has no beginning and never an end:
It's risky and rough and it's plumb full of troubles,
From Shifty — that's shale — up to Powder Cut Bend.

Old-timers will tell you the rangers who made it,
Sang "Roll A Rock Down," with a stiff upper lip,
And cussed all creation, but managed to grade it;
With a thousand-foot drop if a pony should slip.

Oh, the day it was wet and the sky it was cloudy,
The trail was as slick as an oil-rigger's pants,
When Ranger McCabe on his pony, Old Rowdy,
Came ridin' where walkin' was takin' a chance.

"Oh, Roll A Rock Down!" picks and shovels was clangin',
And Rowdy a-steppin' that careful and light,
When the edge it gave way and McCabe was left hangin'
Clean over the rim — with no bottom in sight.

Songs of the Trail

I shook out a loop — bein' crowded for throwin';
I flipped a fair noose for a rope that was wet:
It caught just as Mac lost his holt and was goin',
And burned through my fingers: it's burnin' them yet.

For Ranger McCabe never knuckled to danger;
My pardner in camp, on the trail, or in town:
And he slid into glory, a true forest-ranger,
With: "Hell! I'm a-goin'! Just roll a rock down."

So, roll a rock down where a ranger is sleepin'
Aside of his horse below Powder Cut Bend:
I ride and I look where the shadows are creepin',
And roll a rock down — for McCabe was my friend.

I've sung you my song and I've told you my story,
And all that I ask when I'm done with the show,
Is, roll a rock down when I slide into glory,
And say that I went like a ranger should go.

ENCHANTED ISLES

OUR days are golden, languorous days of ease and melody;
no more

May we return across the vast that lies between our -
youth and this;

No more we tread the outland ways whereon our feet were
swift, before

We found this isle, the unsurpassed, beyond the gate of
Charybdis.

Isle of our dreams! Enchanted land! We know nor crave no
other home.

Here all is fragrant, calm, and fair with fruit and flower
and kindly sky,

And magic shores of whispering sand, sea-girt with jeweled
eyes of foam

Flashing along the harbor where our idle ships at anchor
lie.

We wait To-morrow — and it comes in opal chariots and
gold

That sweep the valley mist aside and flame across the
fadeless blue,

While faint and far the muffled drums of cavern-haunting
seas are rolled,

Awakening the helmèd tide to ineffectual war anew.

Songs of the Trail

No turmoil of the world is here; no challenge to the glad
amaze

Of high adventure on the trail, the trackless land, the
hidden stream;

And only phantom sails appear — lost caravels of other
days

That vanish whither? What avail to wake and ask, from
dream to dream?

The manna of the palm and vine is ours; a cloudy chalice
brings

Its benison of wine that falls in pools of jade and por-
phyry,

O'er which cool, emerald arches shine, aglow with flash of
crimson wings;

Softly the lulling sea-wind calls, and sunlight dances on
the sea.

Of this we dreamed when in the dawn of worlds primordial,
each a star

Marked for his conquest by the might of vaunting
youth's unfettered hand,

As did the kings of eons gone, their fame and glory fled
afar:

Our triumph theirs. Oh, vain delight! Our solace, this
forgotten land.

Enchanted Isles

Yet when the dusk is on the shore and silences to slumber
woo,

When o'er the deep the sun has set: hushed for a space
then heard again,

Voices of olden-time implore — sweet voices of the loves
we knew . . .

No dream so deep we may forget the homes of men . . .
the homes of men . . .

THE LOST TRAIL

BORN rangers, both of us: and we were young,
Lusty and like, in that we shunned the town,
And loved the high, far hills that overhung
Great purple tides of forest, rolling down
Into a sheer of space that dimmed the eye
To gaze on overlong. My duty led
To many tasks; the foremost to descry
The creeping forest-fire. My comrade, bred
Of royal stock beyond the Baltic Sea,
A wolf-dog, ran the mountain trails with me:

Ranging the brush, a silent, silvery ghost,
Peering, perchance, across the wide abyss
Of some lone cañon's desolated coast,
Wondering what lay beyond the nothingness:
Or, breathing deep the taint of lion-pad,
With fore foot lifted and with questful eye,
An instant statue — then the swift, the glad,
Wild chase to catch the fleeting phantasy,
Till shadowy shape with shadow melted, then,
Hearing my whistle, back to me again.

Or, and uncalled, from out the under-maze
Of whipping brush, he'd lunge and leap to bring

The Lost Trail

His kill to me, with joy that I should gaze
Upon the still form of the fleet, wild thing:
Then spake his eyes, aglow with native pride:
Here at your feet my gift, the kill, I lay:
Forever will I follow where you ride:
Bid me to come or go — and I obey!

Such was his blood — that thoroughbred, high strain
Of loyalty, affection, courage: true
To me, his god, though hunger, hardship, pain,
Were his reward.

Yet sometimes, breaking through
His dignity, he showed that he had wit:
I, dwelling on some sorrow, some old wrong,
He'd act the puppy for my benefit:
Then would he fling himself, with that deep song
Of battle when the fighting prey is near,
Straight at my breast and shake me from my dream
With the brute shock: then, jumping high and clear,
In, like a stroke of flame — out, like the gleam
Of dawn among the pines, till done the play:
Paws on my shoulders, quick breath on my cheek,
He'd tell me in his big, warm, friendly way,
All that his faithful soul would gladly speak.

Steep the lost trail and narrow — narrower grew,
Even to the angle where it disappeared:

Songs of the Trail

I felt my pony stiffen — looked, and knew
His sudden terror, what he saw and feared:
There on the rock, as lithe as crawling mist,
A mountain-lion clung. What held my hand
In dull inaction, helpless to resist
The threatening fury — who may understand?

Only — I knew — beheld in waking dream
Of stupor, something past me rise and creep
Along the ledge. I saw the sunlight gleam
On a gray wolf-dog's coat, while o'er the deep
Came a low whimper that I read aright:
Farewell! Not fear. There on the cañon-rim
He quivered to the leap — and made his flight.
Too late I drew my gun and followed him.

How often on the lost trail have I stood,
Calling adown the silence till there came,
Faint from the depths of starlit solitude,
The old, beloved cadence of his name,
A memory, an echo: Yet I know
— Else is no truth in dream, or voice of sleep —
He waits his master's coming, eyes aglow,
An instant statue topping some far steep,
Or, ranging through the brush, a silvery ghost,
Peering, perchance, across the wide abyss
Of some lone cañon's desolated coast,
Wondering what lies beyond the nothingness.

THE DOG-STAR PUP

ON the silver edge of a vacant star near the trembling
Pleiades,

A Hobo, lately arrived from earth sat rubbing his rusty
chin,

All unaware, as he waited there with his elbows on his
knees,

That an angel stood at the Golden Gate, impatient to
let him in.

The Hobo, peering across the space on a million worlds
below,

Started up as he heard a voice: "Mortal, why wait ye
there?"

He scratched his head as he turned and said, "I reckon
I got to go,

And mebby the goin' is just as good in Heaven, as any-
where."

A little while and the Hobo stood at the thrice-barred
Golden Gate:

"Enter!" the stately angel cried. "You came to a worthy
end,

Though the sad arrears of your wasted years have oc-
casioned a brisk debate,

You gave your life in a noble cause — you perished to
save a friend."

Songs of the Trail

“Only me dog.” And the Hobo smiled, but the startled
angel frowned

At that rack of rags that was standing there adorning
the right-of-way:

“Him and me we was pardners, see! down there where the
world goes round,

And I was waitin’ for him to come — but mebby he
stopped to play.”

“You are late,” said the angel, “one year late!” The Hobo
turned his head.

“Then who was holdin’ the watch on me when I saved
me pal? Was you?

Just figure it out, if me dog cashed in a-savin’ me life, in-
stead,

Now would n’t he wait for his missin’ mate till he seen I
was comin’ too?”

Sadly the angel shook his head and lifted the portal bar:

“One minute more and the Scribe will strike your name
from the Roll Sublime.”

When up from below came a yellow dog a-hopping from
star to star,

And wagging his tail as he sniffed the trail that his mas-
ter had had to climb.

Then something slipped in the scheme of things: a comet
came frisking by,

A kind of a loco Dog-Star pup just out for a little chase;

The Dog-Star Pup

The yellow pup got his dander up and started across the sky,

As the flickering comet tucked his tail — and never was such a race!

Round the Heavens and back again flew comet and dog, unchecked;

The Great Bear growled and the Sun Dogs barked. Astronomers had begun

To rub their eyes in a wild surmise that their records were incorrect,

When the puppy, crossing his master's track, stopped short, and the race was done.

Singed and sorry and out of breath he mounted the starry trail,

And trotted to where his master stood by the gate to The Promised Land:

“T was a flamin’ run that you gave him, son, and you made him tuck his tail,”

And the Hobo patted the puppy’s head with a soiled but forgiving hand.

When, slowly the Gates dissolved in air and the twain were left alone,

On a road that wound through fields and flowers, past many a shady tree;

Songs of the Trail

“Now this is like we’d ‘a’ made it, tike, an’ I reckon it’s
all our own,

And nothin’ to do but go,” he said, “which is Heaven
for you and me.”

Heaven — save that the Hobo felt a kind of uneasy pride
As he pushed his halo a bit aslant and gazed at his gar-
ments strange;

But the pup knew naught of these changes wrought since
crossing the Great Divide,

For the heart of a dog — an he love a man — may
never forget or change.

THE TRAIL TO THE HOLLOW TREE

EYES in de window an' it's black outside:
 Bat in de cabin flyin' roun' an' roun':
Big bell tollin' 'case a niggah died,
 Somebody whisperin' an' diggin' in de groun'!

Lohd hab mercy on dis niggah's soul!
 I done hide de razor in de holla tree:
De owl am a-whoooin' an' de big bell toll,
 Tollin' an' tellin' dat de man was me!

Melody Sybil was mah turkle-dove:
 Melody, Melody, I ask you how
Buck Toma say you his lady-love?
 Toma is a-sleepin' in de deep groun', now.

Sleepin' in de groun' an' he don' come back.
 I done hide de razor in de holla tree:
Thunder am rollin' an' de lightnin' crack,
 An' de wind am tellin' what de owl don' see!

I meet dat Toma on de levee walk:
 I ask dat Toma what he gwine say:
He puff out his ches' like he gwine talk,
 Den he sniffle an' he blink an' he walk away.

Songs of the Trail

Big Buck Toma he am mighty proud,
Walkin' an' talkin' wif my Melody,
An' dis niggah standin' in dat shiny crowd,
An' de black folks nudgin' — an' dey laugh at me!

Almos' mawnin', for de clock say foah.
Bat on de rafter hangin' upside down:
Who dat knockin' on de cabin doah?
Who dat stompin' an' a walkin' roun'?

• • • • •
Jedge — don' you listen to dat Melody!
She gwine make trouble wif her crazy talk.
Yas! I done hide de razor in de holla tree,
But I *don'* kill Toma on de levee walk!

THE RUSTLER

FROM the fading smoke of a branding-fire in a mesquite hollow close and dim,

We followed a phantom pony-track, over the range and down

Into the cool, deep cañon gloom, then up to the mesa's ragged rim;

And the foam-clots flew from our swinging reins as we loped to the desert town.

Gray in the dusk at the hitching-rail there loomed the shape of a lean cayuse,

His gaunt flanks streaked with dust-dried sweat in the doorway's golden glow;

A rider stood at the lamplit bar tugging the knot of his neck-scarf loose,

And some one sang to the silver strings in the moonlit patio.

He flung a coin as we crowded in. He knew us all, but with no surprise:

We had run him down and he faced us square, a fighter from hat to heel:

The music stopped and a Spanish girl came from the dusk, her wondering eyes

Filled with a strange and fearsome light; but his were as cool as steel.

Songs of the Trail

Tense as a lion crouched to spring he poised on the midnight brink of fate;

But she, with a smile, drew near the lamp, playing the woman's game:

A crash — and the room was black and still: a whispered word and we knew, too late,

As hell surged up in our hearts, we drew and the dark was streaked with flame.

We heard the thud of a pony's stride and shuffled back to the open door,

Ringed by a sudden crowd that came, questioning, shuffling, till

A light was made in the 'dobe bar, and a shadow lay on the beaten floor —

We saw an arm and an upturned face, girlish and white and still.

Gray in the dusk at the hitching-rail there loomed the shape of a lean cayuse,

His gaunt flanks streaked with sun-dried sweat in the lamplight's golden glow:

But no rider stood at the lamplit bar tugging the knot of his neck-scarf loose,

And no one sang to the silver string in the moonlit patio.

BURRO

BELOVED burro of the ample ear,
Philosopher, gray hobo of the dunes,
Delight of children, thistle-chewing seer,
From Lebanon and eld, how many moons?

Muse of Mafiana: sturdy foe of haste;
True to yourself in every attitude;
A statue of dejection, shaggy-faced,
Or plodding with your pack of cedar-wood;

Stopping to turn about, with motion stiff,
As though you half imagined something wrong:
Wondering if you were there complete, or if
The other half forgot to come along.

What melancholy thoughts bestir your heart
When, like an ancient pump, you lift a tone,
Lose it and lift another — with an art
Bequeathed to none on earth, save you alone?

Your melody means something deep, unseen;
Desert contralto you are called: perchance
An ear attuned to mysteries might glean
More from your song than simple assonance.

Songs of the Trail

You sing the truth, without a touch of guile:
And truth were sad enough — yet your fond guise
Of bland sincerity provokes a smile,
And so the world is richer — burro-wise.

Thus do you serve twofold, in that you please
That subtle sense that loves the ludicrous
Nor scorns affection. Oh, Demosthenes
Of Andalusia, left to preach to us!

Dogging the shadows of some empty street,
Content with what your indolence may find,
You let the world roll on, and keep your feet,
Or let it run, and still you stray behind.

THE LONG ROAD WEST

ONCE I heard a Hobo, singing by the tie-trail,
Squatting by the red rail rusty with the dew:
Singing of the firelight, singing of the high-trail
Singing to the morning as the dawn broke through:

*“Saddle, rail, or pack-sack — any way you take it :
Choose a pal and try him, but on your own is best.
Sand, clay, or cinders — any way to make it,
Looking for To-morrow down the long road West.”*

Far across the ranges, over where the sea swings,
Battering the raw ledge, booming up the sand:
There I heard a sailor telling what the sea sings,
Sings to every sailor when he longs for land:

*“When you’ve saved your cash and when you’ve done
your hitch, sir ;
— Holystone and hardtack, buckle to the test —
When you’re back in port and your feet begin to itch, sir,
Think about To-morrow, and the long road West.”*

Slowly came a cowboy riding round the night-herd;
Silver was the starlight, slender was the moon:
Then I heard him singing, lonely as a night-bird,
Pony’s head a-nodding to the queer old tune:

Songs of the Trail

*“Wind, rain, and sunshine — every kind of weather :
Sweating on the mesa, freezing on the crest :
Me and just my shadow, jogging on together,
Jogging on together down the long road West.”*

Lazy was the cool stream slipping through the far
light
Shadowing the buckthorn high along the hill,
When I heard a bird sing softly in the starlight,
Singing in the evening when the trees were still:

*“Valley, range, and high trail, mesa, butte, and river :
Sun across the lowlands, rolling down to rest :
There’ll always be the skyline, running on forever,
Running on forever, down the long road West.”*

THE EDGE OF TOWN

THE scattering sage stands thin and tense
As though afraid of the barbed-wire fence;
A windmill purrs in the lazy breeze
And a mocker sings in the pepper trees,
And beneath their shadows, gold and blue,
Hangs the old red olla, rimmed with dew:
Where the valley quail in the twilight call,
As the sunset fades on the 'dobe wall,
Just where the foothill trail comes down,
I have made my home on the edge of town.

A few green acres fenced and neat,
By a road that will never become a street;
And once in a while, down the dusty way
A traveler comes at the end of day;
A desert rat or some outland tramp,
Seeking a place for his evening camp;
The door of my 'dobe is four feet wide,
And there's always a bed and a meal, inside.

And many a one of the wights that roam,
Has stopped at my house and found a home:
And many a tale of these outland folk
Has furnished a tang to the evening smoke,

Songs of the Trail

While the stars shone down on our dwelling-place,
And the moon peered in at a dusky face.

Singers, they, of the open land;
The timbered peak and the desert sand,
Peril and joy of the hardy quest,
Trail and pack of the unspoiled West:
Though crowded back to the lone, last range,
Their dream survives that will never change.

When the hill-stream roars from the far-off height,
And the rain on the patio dances white;
When the log in my winter fireplace gleams,
And my Airedale whimpers his hunting-dreams;
Should a boot-heel grate on the portal floor,
Should I hear a knock at the dripping door,
Then I know that Romance has again come down
From the high, far hills, to the edge of town.

PONY TRACKS

I WAS ridin' for the Blue,
When she wrote to me from France;
Wrote and sent her picture, too!
Talk about that there "Romance"!

Wrote to me, the Ridin' Kid,
Just a cattle-chasin' cuss,
But you bet I'm glad she did
Say that she had heard of us

Cowboys of the Western range;
Kinda thought that joke the best,
For we'd call it mighty strange
If the ranges were n't out West.

Sent her picture, and it's great!
Slim and neat from heel to head,
Stylish dressed and settin' straight
On a dandy thoroughbred.

Said she'd read some poetry
All about a Roan Cayuse;
Well, I own it's up to me,
I ain't makin' no excuse,

Songs of the Trail

But sometimes I got to sing,
When my pony jogs along;
Seems his hoofs they click and ring
Till they've hammered out a song

Kinda like the sound of rain,
Kinda like the sun and sky,
Shadows streakin' crost the plain,
Little clouds a-floatin' by,

And a puncher and his hoss
Ridin' trails that never end . . .
Well, I showed it to the boss,
And he sent it to a friend.

Friend he owned a printin'-shop,
And a high-tone magazine;
Say, my heart sure took a flop,
When that poetry I seen.

Boys they joshed me stout and strong;
Called me "Little Warblin' Kid!"
Me! I'm only six feet long
From my boot-heels to my lid.

Wonder if her eyes are brown?
Wonder if they're blue or gray?

Pony Tracks

Wonder if she lives in town?

Wonder if *she'd* ever say,

“Howdy, pardner!” Shucks! but she
Never seen a Stetson hat,
Never seen a guy like me;
And she'd never talk like that.

But I learned to say her name;
Asked the schoolmarm straight, one day;
Print and sound ain't just the same,
But it spells like this — “Edmée.”

Wrote that she would like to ride
Where the world is big and free,
But she says her family's pride
Keeps her where she ought to be.

Says she's longin' for the life
Out here where the cattle roam;
Well, *I* never had a wife,
Never hung my hat to home.

Guess that letter got me hard;
Prettiest girl I ever seen;
That's what comes of singin', pard,
And a high-tone magazine.

Songs of the Trail

When I'm ridin' round the herd,
And the stars are shinin' bright,
I keep practicin' that word,
And I aim to get it right;

“Edmée.” But my pony's feet,
Keep a-arguin' and say,
Slow and steady — and repeat —
“France is — mighty — far — away!”

THE RANCHO IN THE RAIN

THE rabbit's ears are flattened and he's squattin' scared
and still,

Ag'inst the drippin' cedar; and the quail below the hill
Are huddled up together where the brush is close and thick;
The snow is meltin' on the range and chokin' up the creek;
The clouds are hangin' level, draggin' slow across the plain,
And me? I'm settin' smokin' and a-smilin' at the rain.

There's a saddle that needs mendin' and some overalls
that's tore;

But the stock is fed and happy and the milk is on the
shelf.

Now a woman would raise ructions at the mud that's on
the floor,

But it's rainin' on the rancho — and I'm runnin' things
myself.

Kind of lonesome? Well, for some folks, but I'm used to
livin' so;

If I feel the need of talkin', there's the puppy and his
pranks:

There's the hosses in the stable, munchin' easy-like and
slow,

And it's company to feed 'em and to hear 'em nicker
thanks.

Songs of the Trail

With my feet ag'inst the fender and the fire a-snappin'
bright,

And the smell of burnin' cedar mixin' pleasant with my
smoke,

And a-r'arin', tearin' story of the range, that's ribbed up
right,

Why lay off and fix the damper where the isinglass is
broke?

I'm a-bachin'; that's the answer; takin' orders jest from
me,

And I aim to say I'm workin' for a kind of friendly boss,
Not forgettin' thiere's the Marster that's a-tallyin' to see
If I'm hangin' with the drags or puttin' every deal
across.

Kind of simple, this here livin', if a fella keeps his head,
Keeps the stock from gittin' ribby, keeps his fences
tight and straight,

Sweats enough to keep him limber, ain't afraid to go to
bed

When the boys are up and drinkin', playin' cards, and
settin' late.

Ridin' range and punchin' cattle, I've took notice now and
then,

That the man who's fair to critters is the kind to reach
the top;

The Rancho in the Rain

He'll be workin' willin' hosses and be workin' willin' men,

But no man is savin' money that will spur 'em till they drop.

But it's *rainin'* — jest a-roarin'; and the desert's drinkin' deep;

On the bunk-house roof the water's talkin' sassy-like and bold,

And the world she looks as if she'd kind of like to go to sleep,

But the rain it sure won't let her — keeps her shiverin' and cold.

Here comes Buddy crost the pasture, buttin' weather strong and stout;

Now I wonder what's the racket? Yearlin' bogged at Mesa Lake!

Hunt the stove — I'll git my slicker. And you could n't git her out?

Well, I reckon we can make it. I'll jest saddle up Old Jake.

• • • • • • • • • •

That's the way it goes with ranchin' — never know what's goin' to come:

Luck or trouble, till it hits you, so you got to guess it, some.

Songs of the Trail

Saved that yearlin'. Mud and leather! But the fire feels
good ag'in!

Yes, you got to keep a-guessin' and you'll hit it, now and
then.

Night has stitched the clouds together, but she's left a hole
or two,

And a mighty slimsy linin' where the water's pourin'
through,

But it's feedin' thirsty pasture, makin' hay and makin'
grain,

And I'm settin' warm — and smokin' — and a-smilin' at
the rain.

RIGHT OF WAY

CORRALLED in the sooty roundhouse the steel-ribbed Titan stands,

Blind, inanimate, biding the touch of his master's hands;
The sun draws down to the skyline, the sudden switch-lights gleam,

And the Titan rolls from the inner gloom in a swelter of singing steam.

Clunk! Clank! over the switch-points the sullen monster glides,

To the stately lift of the rising rods that shimmer along its sides,

And coupler locks into coupler; the plaints of the air-valves cease:

A green star glows in the open block as the shuddering brakes release.

From the dusk of the slumbering desert comes the lean coyote's cry;

Boot heels crunch on the cinders and a lantern swings on high;

A white shaft tunnels the darkness, gilding the iron trail:
Zoom! Zoom! bellows the Titan, and, *Way for the Desert Mail!*

Songs of the Trail

Dying down to a dot of red the lights of the town recede,
As power is loosed by a steady hand to a purring streak of
speed,

And a song runs over the outlands, arrogant, bold, sublime!
*I run my race with the sun, the stars, and the changeless pace
of Time!*

Zoom! Zoom! Zoom! for a siding and a cattle trail flits by,
A whip-lash flicker of dusty road in the Titan's steady eye,
A road that ends at the high corral where the loaded stock
cars wait;

Zoom! Zoom! abrupt is the Titan's scorn for the haulers of
stock and freight.

Zoom! Zoom! to a rhythm faster the shuttling side rods play,
Till the driver-treads are strips of steel close wed to the
rigid way;

The flanges snarl as they bite the curve; the clutching
brake-shoes whine;

Then the heaving headlight finds the straight of the streak-
ing silver line.

Far from the iron highway a cowboy riding herd,
Softly sings to the cattle; turns with a muttered word,
As the distant drone of the Titan's voice hushes his easy
rhyme;

*I run my race with the sun, the stars, and the changeless pace
of Time!*

Right of Way

“Save your hoss for the hills ahead,” is the cowboy’s placid song,

While his clear eyes follow the twinkling train as the Titan speeds along;

He grins as the tail lights die in space and a cloudless moon appears,

His free heart tuned to his pony’s pace, he sings to the shuffling steers.

And, “He’s bustin’ right into To-morrow, bronc; just splittin’ the night in two;

I reckon he’s got the right of way, but that’s nothin’ to me and you;

Oh, he’ll make his time and we’ll take our time with plenty of room to roam,

So it’s save your hoss for the hills ahead and mebby you’ll make it home.”

And these are the singers the outlands know, each with his work in hand,

In the lurching cab of the Desert Mail; in saddle and grazing land;

One who sings to the midnight herd, breathing his simple creed,

And one who hurtles through cloven space singing the song of speed.

CHILAO

“CHILAO is a gentle hoss.” That’s what his owner told me;

I aimed to buy him of his boss;—I reckon that he sold me.

I threw a saddle on the colt and forked him, slow and steady,

The owner loosed that thunderbolt, then hollered, “Are you ready?”

He kep’ his warnin’ till the last, when I was up — and busy;

That colt he swapped his ends so fast he kep’ me middlin’ dizzy;

I lost one stirrup, popped my hat and took to pullin’ leather,

Then, him a-kinkin’ like a cat, we left the earth together.

I raked him where the hair is thin. Says I, “That’s what I owe you!

The show is on, the folks are in, I guess I got to show you!”

He put his nose between his feet and humped his back amazin’,

Then, when he seen I kep’ my seat, he quit — and took to grazin’.

Chilao

Since then he's never kinked a hair: as gentle as a kitten.
I reckon if I'd quit him there, there'd been no end of quit-tin'.

He tried it once and made me ride; I'll own he had me guessin';

But both of us has kep' our pride — and both has learnt a lesson.

He seen that I was there to stay, a-comin' or a-goin';
He tried to throw me far away, and made a sorry showin';
And when I buy a colt ag'in I'll do my own advisin',
And early risin' ain't no sin, but not that kind of risin'.

You see, I kep' a saddle warm when I was young and limber;

A saplin' 's supple in a storm, but not the seasoned timber.

A young tree thinks the wind's a joke — and is n't there to take it;

But if a old tree is n't broke, a cyclone's like to break it.

But now that colt, Chilao, kind of fancies me, I'm thinkin',
He knows it never slips my mind — his eatin' or his drinkin' —

And sometimes, ridin' up from town I read the mail I'm packin',

Reins on the horn and hangin' down, and he keeps right on shackin'.

Songs of the Trail

And at the gate he's right on deck, while I unhook and
hook it,

But when you see him arch his neck, you'd say he does n't
look it.

It's when you get them playful kind and ketch 'em young
and growin',

And let 'em know what's in your mind, you got the best
a-goin'.

Come 'ere, Chilao! Let's shake hands. This man, he wants
to buy you.

He won't. But sure he understands! Now, quit your actin'
shy, you!

There's Ma a-callin' us to eat. I got more stock to show,
sir;

I'll sell 'most anything on feet, but not Chilao, no, sir!

YARDLAW'S RIDE

THE high stream gnawed at the river-bank and the dead
 clay crumbled down,
As the snow-fed current flung its mane with a charging
 leap and toss,
When, roweled red from cinch to flank in a midnight race
 from town,
A big roan plunged in the yellow flood and battled his
 way across.

Yardlaw bent to the sound of rain as he paused on the
 farther shore,
Flung a glance in the night behind, peered in the night
 ahead,
Felt the ribs of the red roan strain as he gathered breath
 once more,
Then a quick-crooked knee as the steel bit in and over
 the trail he fled.

Into the blind, black face of night he flung on his fearsome
 way,
Gathered tense for a stumbling lurch, a hoof on a turning
 stone,

Songs of the Trail

A foreleg snapped, perchance, then fight! And he visioned
a wolf at bay,
As mile after mile was spurned behind by the hoofs of the
big red roan.

South and south to the open land, south to the viewless
line,
Battered stiff by the slanting storm that scattered the
sand afar,
Yardlaw fled from a capture planned by the men of the
Nine-Bar-Nine,
And the grim, gray face of the man he'd killed, that
night, at the Oro Bar.

The big red roan knew naught of this as he swung to the
level plain,
Yet he knew that Fear in the saddle sat and hot Hate
followed fast;
He flinched as he heard a thirty hiss like the stinging lash
of rain,
Yet lost no inch of his running reach as the night wind
hurtled past.

Dawn lay on the Rim like a golden rope round yucca and
sage and sand,
As Yardlaw, sparing a glance behind, loosened his saddle-gun,

Yardlaw's Ride

And pulled the roan to an easy lope, as he gazed at the
desert land,
Seeking a hollow to make his fight with his back to the
rising sun.

They came in the flame of the desert day, out of the empty
night,
Three riders far on a little rise, and Yardlaw raised his
head;
He saw a shimmering black dot play on his sun-blurred
rifle sight,
Then the whip of a slug that snarled through space:
"They've a horse to spare," he said.

Wide they rode of the water-hole, circled the desert
wide,
Two black dots where there had been three; and Yardlaw
knew their play,
And made his own as he slowly stole to the top of the low
divide,
Swung to the roan and headed south in the heat of the
naked day.

A bullet tugged at his open sleeve and he heard the distant
shot,
Turned in the saddle, replied in kind, then dropped like
a falling stone,

Songs of the Trail

Playing his desperate make-believe — and whether they knew or not,

He took the chance as he watched the ears and the eye of the big red roan.

An hour in the burning silence vast, and the red roan's gallant head

Drooped to the thrust of the desert sun. Weary and worn he stood,

Knowing now he could rest at last, for Hate to the north had sped;

Buck Yardlaw rose and loosed the cinch and cursed at the solitude.

THE LONE RED ROCK

A song of the range, an old-time song,
To the patter of pony's feet,
That he used to sing as we rode along,
In the hush of the noonday heat;

“Follow me out where the cattle graze,
Where the morning shadows fall,
On the far, dim trails of the outland ways
That lead through the chaparral.”

There, where the red butte stands alone,
And the brush dies down to sand,
Is the name of a friend — a mound of stone,
And the sweep of this lonesome land.

His name is there, and a word or two,
And the brand that we used to run;
But his name could never mean much to you,
And the old, glad days are done.

“Follow me out where the free sons ride,
Where the young coyotes play;
Where the call of the quail from the mountain-side
Comes out of the morning gray.”

Songs of the Trail

“Follow me out” — a laugh, a word,
In the dust of the roundup, when
His horse went down in the milling herd,
A break in the haze — and then;

I dragged him free, and he tried to smile,
But his gaze was dim with Night;
“I’ll rest by the butte a little while . . .”
And the bronze of his face went white.

So a singer rode in the sunlit space,
Past yucca and ridge and stone,
And a shadow with him, pace for pace,
His own, yet not his own.

OLD SAN ANTONE

IN Texas town of San Antone the Rose of Alvarado grew
From bud to early Southern bloom; her sire's delight, a
lissome flame:
Each splendid suitor for his own her beauty and her
laughter knew,
But none her heart till from the North a blue-eyed
Caballero came.

His broad sombrero, twinkling spur, his rein-chains ringing
silver-sweet,
She knew along the morning way. And he, light-hearted,
lithe and tall,
Beheld the Rose and smiled at her. Day long she viewed an
empty street,
Yet evening found his pony tied near Alvarado's garden
wall.

Old San Antone beneath the moon slow creeping past the
portal white:
“*Ah, mi amor! Mi corazon!*” So Alvarado's daughter
sang
An Andalusian lover's tune. So clear the stars, so still the
night!
When, tinkling to an alien stride a rowel on the pathway
rang.

Songs of the Trail

“Ah, mi amor! Mi corazon!” Twain shadows through the
garden passed,
The belted rider of the North, a stranger in forbidden
land,
And she, the Rose of San Antone. A whisper, “You have
come at last!”
And from the dark mantilla’s fold the flutter of a little
hand.

None but the stars were there to hear. Her *Caballero* bowed
his head,
As she, on tiptoe, trembling up, in instant fire of rapture
yearned;
He laughed away her uttered fear and gave a promise in its
stead,
While softly over San Antone the moon of summer mid-
night burned.

Faint grew the stars, and they were gone. The hidden roses
slowly drew
From shadowy trellis to the light, as though they sought
a vanished face,
Peering across the desert dawn and listening for a voice
they knew,
While gray, old Alvarado mourned within his silent gar-
den place.

Old San Antone

Vanished the Rose long years ago; vanished the garden of
delight;

Forgotten is the lover's tune; and from the soundless
desert floor,

Sand drifts across the *patio*. . . . So clear the stars, so still
the night!

Old San Antone beneath the moon: "*Mi corazon! Ah, mi
amor!*"

THE LITTLE FIRES

From East to West they're burning, in forge and tower and home,

And on, beyond the outlands, across the ocean foam;
In far and misty islands, on range and sea and height,
The little fires along the trail that twinkle down the night.

The camp-fire of the Hobo, beside the trestle-beam,
A smoky can his coffee-cup, he dreams a hazy dream;
The trestle creaks and thunders beneath the Midnight Mail,
Oh, he'll follow it — to-morrow — shuffling down the iron trail;

Adventuring! Adventuring! And oh, the sights to see!
And little fires in lazy eyes that wink at you and me.

With a thousand miles behind us and a thousand miles to go,
We'll turn and cross the mesa where the gramma grasses
grow;

There's a cattle trail to water and a belted cowboy crew,
And the canvas of the wagon with the shadows trembling
through;

There's a whole and hearty welcome in each voice and eye
and hand;

— An outfit busting broncos, glad for news from over-
land —

The Little Fires

Sit right in and tell your story, sing your song, or eat your chuck;

Here's your health, in red-hot coffee: "To the trail — and plenty luck!"

Adventuring! Adventuring! And oh, the sights to see!
And little fires in bronco eyes that wink at you and me.

Where the mesa meets the timber as it marches up the steep,

Glows a beacon like a hill-star near a band of bedded sheep:
From the firelight's fading circle where the sheep and shadows blend,

"Como 'sta, amigo!" greets us; Spanish for, "How goes it, friend?"

And the Andalusian herder curls a smoke and nods the way,
As he murmurs, "Caliente, San Clemente, Santa Fé";
And the very words are music waking memoried desires,
So we turn and foot it down the trail to find more little fires.

Adventuring! Adventuring! And oh, the sights to see!
And little fires of Southern stars that wink at you and me.

The wind from off the ranges whispers out across the sand;
And who would think to find a fire in this forgotten land?
Yet in the desert spaces a tiny ember gleams, ..
And by the fire a wanderer, asleep in splendid dreams;

Songs of the Trail

Dreams of gold he'll find to-morrow, but the vain to-morrows come,

Till the heart has ceased its singing and the lips of hope are dumb,

Till a phantom figure, rising, with a phantom burro, plods Out across the mighty silence, seeking golden altar gods;

Adventuring! Adventuring! And oh, the sights to see!
And little, hidden yellow fires that wink at you and me.

Up the ranges, down the valley to the sleepy harbor-side,
Where a score of lights are blinking and a schooner waits the tide;

Where a nodding dory beckons and the ruddy shadows dance

Down a trail that's never ending, to the Islands of Romance,

Till the last adventure calls us from the old, the vain desires,

To a trail that's still untrodden, though aglow with little fires;

Where no wanderer grows weary and a man is free to roam,
Or hang his hat upon a star and call the planet "Home."

THE END

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